

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) An ankle brace comprising:

a rigid U-shaped member sized to fit under a foot, the rigid U-shaped member having medial and lateral elements for extending along medial and lateral sides of a leg to support the inner and outer surfaces of an ankle and leg of an individual;

inner and outer layers surrounding the rigid member and forming a body having a foot portion with a forward edge defining a toe aperture, and a footbed, and a leg portion with an upper edge, and rear edges extending from the upper edge to the footbed, the body having side areas adjacent the medial and lateral elements of the U-shaped member and, a flexible front area; and

a flexible heel portion that extends rearward of the intersection of the rear edges of the leg portion and the footbed; and

a fastening strap connectable about the body to retain the brace on the foot, ankle and leg of an individual.

2. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the footbed is sized to extend from the ball of the foot to the heel portion of a foot.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The ankle brace of claim 3 1 wherein the flexible heel portion comprises inner and outer layers and a cushion layer therebetween.

5. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 4 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.
6. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 further comprising a leg cover attached adjacent to a rear edge of the body for protecting the leg from the fastening strap.
7. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 further comprising a cushion layer between the inner layer and the rigid member.
8. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 7 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.
9. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the fastening strap is secured about the body by a hook and loop fastening system.
10. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the inner and outer layers of the body comprise leather.
11. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the rigid member comprises plastic.

12. (Previously Presented) An ankle brace comprising:

a foot engaging portion for receiving a foot in the form of a foot cover including a footbed, a forward edge, and a flexible heel;

a leg engaging portion extending from the foot engaging portion, the leg engaging portion in the form of a leg cover including a top edge and rear edges extending from the top edge towards the footbed defining an opening;

the flexible heel extending rearward of the intersection of the rear edges of the leg cover and the footbed;

a rigid support member in the footbed and extending from proximate the forward edge to the flexible heel, the rigid member further extending up the leg engaging portion for positioning along the medial and lateral sides of a leg to support the inner and outer surfaces of the ankle and lower leg of an individual; and

means for retaining the rear edges of the leg engaging portion in proximity to secure the ankle brace about the foot, ankle and lower leg of an individual.

13. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the foot engaging portion and the leg engaging portion comprise a soft durable material which encases the rigid member.

14. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 13 wherein the soft durable material comprises an inner layer which lines the interior surface of the foot engaging portion and the leg engaging portion, and an outer layer which covers the exterior surface of the foot engaging portion and the leg engaging portion.

15. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 further comprising a cushion layer between the inner layer and the rigid member.

16. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 15 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.

17. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the flexible heel portion comprises inner and outer layers of soft durable material and a cushion layer therebetween.

18. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the means for retaining the rear edges in proximity comprises an adjustable strap.

19. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 18 wherein the strap secures the brace to a leg by a hook and loop fastening system.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Cancelled)

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Previously Presented) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the leg engaging portion comprises a flexible forward portion.